Rewrite of “Reassigning Meanings”

By: Jisu Pang

In Simi Linton’s “Reassigning Meaning,” she discusses how the word disability has various definitions from medical professionals to the common man and how those meanings influence people with disabilities. People define the word “disability” in many ways that do not always make sense to the people with the disabilities. Linton discusses how there are both positives and negatives to the medical meanings of the word. The positives are that people with disabilities gains benefits that “have increased the well-being and vitality” (224). The negatives include people judging their lives by their definition of “disabled” and how miserable they believe people with disabilities are. People also use negative words that mean “disabled” to themselves such as “cripple, gimp, and freak” (228). Linton states how photographs rarely show pictures of people in their wheelchairs because people want them to “be like everybody else” (230). She argues that the word “disability” should not define a person for who they are (233). She explains how “disabled people are more likely to say that someone uses a wheelchair” rather than say that they are “wheelchair bound” (233). The definition of “disability” causes the categories of normal and abnormal. By differentiating the disabled and the able, there is a creation of minority group (the disabled). The meaning of the word has changed over time with the different generations. People congratulate disabled people for overcoming obstacles because they think it’s much more difficult for them. While it may be more difficult, a disabled body does not want to be applauded every time he or she does down the ramp alone. This text is about how all people view the “disabled,” labeling the word “disability” to their own ideas not regarding whether it will benefit or damage the people with the disability. This is why Linton argues that there should be a new definition of the word “disability” and how people with disabilities should not be conforming to the labels society gives them.

Linton, Simi. "17." *The Disability Studies Reader*. New York: Routledge, 2010. Print